



# News Release

Public Affairs Office  
PO Box 1306  
Albuquerque, NM 87103  
505/248-6911  
505/248-6915 (Fax)

---

**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

**For Release: December 1, 2011**

**Contacts:** Lesli Gray, [Lesli\\_Gray@fws.gov](mailto:Lesli_Gray@fws.gov), 972-569-8588  
Tom Buckley, [Tom\\_Buckley@fws.gov](mailto:Tom_Buckley@fws.gov), 505-248-6455

**Service Announces a 6-Month Extension of the Final Determination for the  
Proposed Listing of the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard  
to Allow for Additional Public Comment and Discussion**

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will publish in the Federal Register a 6-month extension of the final determination of whether to provide protection under the Endangered Species Act (Act) for the dunes sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*) (lizard). The Service is taking this action in order to solicit additional scientific information and public comment before making any final listing determinations regarding the agency's proposal. Publication of this announcement will reopen the comment period on the proposed rule to list the species for 45 days.

On December 14, 2010, the Service published a proposed rule to list the dunes sagebrush lizard, a lizard known from southeastern New Mexico and adjacent west Texas, as endangered under the Act. In addition to the original comment period associated with the publication of the proposed rule, we held two public meetings in April 2011 and reopened the comment period to accept additional public comments. That comment period closed on May 9, 2011.

Section 4(b)(6) of the Act requires that we take one of three actions within 1 year of a proposed listing: (1) Finalize the proposed listing; (2) withdraw the proposed listing; or (3) extend the final determination by not more than 6 months, if there is substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of the available data relevant to the determination, for the purposes of soliciting additional data.

Public comments received since the publication of the proposed rule have expressed concerns regarding the sufficiency and accuracy of the data related to the dune sagebrush lizard's status and trends in New Mexico and Texas.

Therefore, in consideration of the disagreements surrounding the lizard's status, the Service is extending the final determination for 6 months in order to solicit scientific information that will help to clarify these issues.

The 45-day comment period will begin with the publication of this announcement in the Federal Register to ensure the public has full access to, and an opportunity to comment on, all the available information we have received since the second comment period closed. The Service has received new survey information for the lizard in New Mexico and Texas and an unsolicited peer review study on our proposed rule. The Service is soliciting input from concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party concerning the proposed rule in light of this additional information..

If you previously submitted comments or information on the proposed rule, please do not resubmit them. The Service has incorporated them into the public record, and will fully consider them in the preparation of the final determination.

The Service will consider all additional information, comments, and recommendations received from all interested parties with the intention that any final action resulting from this proposal be as accurate as possible and based on the best available scientific and commercial data. The Service is particularly interested in population estimates of the dunes sagebrush lizard in New Mexico and Texas; data that quantify the current amount of habitat and loss of habitat; and survey information, including maps, throughout the species range, especially for Texas.

Written comments must be received by close of business on January 18, 2012. For further information on how and where to submit comments, and to review and/or download these documents visit the Service's Southwest Region's website, <http://southwest.fws.gov/>.

The dunes sagebrush lizard is native to a small area of southeastern New Mexico and west Texas. The species is a habitat specialist and only occurs in sand dune complexes associated with shinnery oak. The primary threat to the lizard is oil and gas development near dune complexes, and shinnery oak removal for the enhancement of forage production for grazing. This has resulted in increased fragmentation of the dunes sagebrush lizard habitat and gaps in the species' range.

The Service's priority is to work with stakeholders and local communities to make ESA implementation less complex, less contentious and more effective. We seek to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwsHQ](http://www.twitter.com/usfwsHQ), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsHQ>.

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>